



December/January 2004

Golden moment for America's Everglades

Partners celebrate first groundbreaking



A throng of media vies to interview Gov. Jeb Bush after the groundbreaking. More than 30 reporters, photographers and videographers from local, state and national newspapers, radio stations and television networks covered the historic event.

October 16 was a golden day for the Everglades when Governor Jeb Bush joined county, state and federal officials, environmental advocates and local leaders to break ground and celebrate the first construction project of the 30-year, \$8 billion state-federal partnership to restore the Everglades.

"Today is a great day for not only Floridians but all Americans," Governor Bush said at the event. "Restoration of America's Everglades is becoming a

reality – years ahead of schedule and tens of millions of dollars under budget. Florida's commitment to the restoration and protection of this natural treasure remains steadfast."

The Southern Golden Gate Estates Hydrologic Restoration Project, situated in the southwest Everglades east of Naples in Collier County, will restore a more natural water flow to more than 50,000 acres of wetlands that were lost to drainage and development in the early

'60s. The project is a component of the world's largest environmental restoration initiative officially known as the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. Overall, the plan's goal is to restore, protect and preserve the water resources of the greater Everglades ecosystem while preserving the habitat of more than 60 endangered species.

"Florida is restoring a national and natural treasure," said South Florida Water Management District Executive Director Henry Dean to the audience of approximately 250 guests and a throng of media. "This monumental effort to improve water quality and water supply is providing real-life benefits to the people of South Florida."

During the first phase of restoration, engineers will remove 25 miles of roads and partially backfill 7 miles of Prairie Canal built by developers, which dramatically altered and degraded the natural landscape. When complete, the first phase will reduce fresh water drainage to the Fakahatchee Strand,

continued inside

- Also in this issue...
- Exploring Partnerships
- Global Water Quality
- Everglades Radio Network
- Hispanic Chamber Awards
- Black Canoe
- Make a PACT
- Boots Are for Workin'
- 10-Mile Creek Project
- At Home on the Range?
- Ask Freddy

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